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Executive

24 July 2007

Report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services

## **Affordable Housing Update – Former Play Area, Chapelfields Road**

### **Summary**

1. At the 24<sup>th</sup> April meeting of the Executive, Members confirmed approval for the development of three sites for affordable housing at Dane Avenue, Morritt Close and Chapelfields Road on the terms and conditions agreed at the Executive meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March. A site plan is attached at Annex 1 of this report. The 13<sup>th</sup> March and 24<sup>th</sup> April Executive reports are listed as background papers at the end of this report together with website links to where they can be downloaded.
2. The minute of the 24<sup>th</sup> April meeting records the wish of the Executive:

‘That officers be requested to ensure that the road layout design for the Chapelfields development accommodates local residents wishes to have a rear access to their properties’
3. This report presents the outcome of officer investigations into the feasibility of providing rear access to existing properties, and requests that this condition is removed from the terms of disposal of the site.

### **Background**

4. Following the 24<sup>th</sup> April meeting of the Executive, officers asked Tees Valley Housing Group to test the feasibility and financial viability of incorporating rear access for existing residents of 75-87 Chapelfields Road into the proposed development of 9 homes on the site.
5. Tees Valley Housing Group have confirmed that providing this access would mean they could only build 8 instead of 9 houses on the development. This is because the length of the access road needed and re-designed car parking bays would reduce the developable area of what is already an awkward shaped site.
6. Earlier discussions with Tees Valley when this scheme was first being considered showed that in terms of financial viability it has always been marginal. There are high abnormal costs associated with developing the site including provision of a pumping station, a long access road, long service runs and works to the existing electricity sub station on the site. It is not permissible to allow any development to include planting or changes to the ground surface level within one metre of an electricity cable from the sub-station that runs parallel to the rear boundaries of the

existing homes. The cost of all these works plus construction costs has to be absorbed by the grant and rental income generated by only nine dwellings.

7. Tees Valley Housing Group has said in relation to providing rear access and being able to build one less home:

‘We are unable to make the infrastructure and construction costs stack up against social housing rents that we are able to charge’.

8. They have concluded that should the caveat to provide rear access remain that they would have no option other than to decline to develop the site. This would mean the loss of nine much needed affordable family homes for rent and the Housing Corporation funding allocated to this scheme.

## **Consultation**

9. Letters were sent to the residents of 75-87 Chapelfields Road on 26<sup>th</sup> June inviting them to discuss the issues with officers and offering home visits to facilitate this. In particular, we were keen to see how other measures, including security to the rear boundaries of their homes, might compensate for the lack of rear access.
10. One resident rang and discussed the details of the proposed scheme. He accepted the difficulties in providing rear access but did raise a concern that for the two homes in the middle of a block of four (no's 75,77 and 83,85) access to the back garden is only possible through the house. We will ensure that Tees Valley Housing Group fully consider whether any rear pedestrian access can be accommodated for these homes without compromising the Secure by Design standards that the development will be expected to meet.

## **Options**

10. Two options are presented for consideration.
11. Option One: To confirm approval for development of the site for affordable housing on the terms and conditions agreed at the 13<sup>th</sup> March and 24<sup>th</sup> April meetings of the Executive. To remove the requirement to provide rear access to the homes at 75-87 Chapelfields Road.
12. Option Two: To withdraw the approval to dispose of this site for affordable housing.
13. Option One is the recommendation of this report.

## **Analysis**

14. This development is not financially viable if rear vehicular access has to be provided to any or all of the existing homes at 75-87 Chapelfields Road. The development will, however, provide a good level of security to the rear boundaries of these homes and the new housing will be built to Secure by Design standards.
17. The development will provide nine family homes at affordable rents and it is considered that the benefits of the development override the inability to provide rear access to the existing homes. All of the seven homes at 75-87 Chapelfields

Road have front gardens that are capable of accommodating a vehicle hard-standing and six already have one.

## **Corporate Priorities**

18. Enabling the building of 200 affordable homes in York each year is an agreed action in the Council Plan 2006 - 2007 and is highlighted as a priority in the council's 2006-2009 Housing Strategy. The proposed development at Chapelfields will also contribute to the council's 2006 – 2009 Corporate Priorities including:
- Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of the city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces.
  - Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city
  - Improve the quality and availability of decent affordable homes in the city.

## **Implications**

19. There are no further implications to those already identified in the Executive report of 13<sup>th</sup> March.

## **Risk Management**

20. The risks associated with the sale and development of this site remain as described in the 13<sup>th</sup> March Executive report. It is worthwhile highlighting that any further delay to approving the disposal of this site for affordable housing may put at risk the Housing Corporation funding that has been earmarked for it.

## **Recommendations**

21. The Executive is recommended to approve Option One of this report.

Reason:

To confirm approval for the disposal of the former Chapelfields Play Area for the development of affordable housing on the terms and conditions agreed at the 13<sup>th</sup> March and 24<sup>th</sup> April meetings of the Executive but with no request for rear access to be provided to the existing properties at 75-87 Chapelfields Road.

## Contact Details

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**Report Approved****Date** 9 July 2007

Tel No. 554098

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)**

*None*

**Wards Affected:** Westfield

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

**Background Papers:**

Proposed sale of Housing Revenue Account land for the development of affordable housing at Dane Avenue, Morritt Close and Chapelfields Road. Meeting of the Executive the Executive, 13 March 2007.

[http://democracy.york.gov.uk/Published/C00000102/M00001351/AI00004567/\\$ProposedSaleofHRALand.docA.ps.pdf](http://democracy.york.gov.uk/Published/C00000102/M00001351/AI00004567/$ProposedSaleofHRALand.docA.ps.pdf)

Responses to statutory notices placed proposing the development of land for affordable housing at Dane Avenue, Morritt Close and Chapelfields Road. Meeting of the Executive, 24 April 2007.

[http://democracy.york.gov.uk/Published/C00000102/M00001357/AI00004885/\\$DaneMorrittChapelfieldsReport.docA.ps.pdf](http://democracy.york.gov.uk/Published/C00000102/M00001357/AI00004885/$DaneMorrittChapelfieldsReport.docA.ps.pdf)

**Annexes**

**Annex 1:** Plan of Chapelfields Road development site